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## KING LEAR 1. 1. 71-77.

*Lear* 1. 1. 71-77, in the *Furness* edition, reads as follows:

*Regan.* In my true heart  
 I find she names my very deed of love ;  
 Only she comes too short ; that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys  
 Which *the most precious square of sense possesses*,  
 And find I am alone felicitate  
 In your dear highness' love.

In the interpretation of this passage, the editors have held generally to three views: *square*, 'a space,' held by Wright and *Blackwood's Magazine* for October, 1853; *square*, 'a capacity,' held by Johnson, Edwards, Capell, and Hudson; *square*, 'a figure of symmetry,' held by Warburton, Holt, Smith, and Schmidt. Moberly explains it as 'estimate,' and Collier, Singer, Keightley, and Bailey alter the text.

Has not this passage fallen prey to the symbolism which is the besetting sin of Shakespeare commentators? Why not explain this as simply a concrete figure from chess? Chess is used in *Temp.* 5. 1. 196, where Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess. In *Shrew* 1. 1. 158, there is a pun on the expression 'to stalemate,' when Katherine says, 'Sir, is it your will to make a stale of me among these mates?' Shakespeare is possibly thinking of checkmate when Macbeth is made to say, 5. 1. 186, 'My mind she hath mated, and amazed my sight.' The senses of the Persian 'mate' in checkmate, and of the Teutonic 'mate,' to match, are played upon in *Errors* 3. 2. 54, where Antipholus of Syracuse replies to Luciana's 'What, are you mad, that you do reason so?' with 'Not mad, but mated.' Again, may not the speech of Troilus, in *Tr. and Cress.* 4. 4. 89, 'I cannot play at subtle games to which the Grecians are most prompt,' refer to the supposed invention of chess by Palamedar?

So much for Shakespeare's allusions to chess. In the light of them, our passage may be interpreted: 'the most precious square, the most advantageous position upon the board, from which one has the board at his command.' 'The joys accruing from having full control over sense, feeling, reason, appreciation of all things, are as naught in comparison with your dear highness' love.' Regan compares her position to the playing of a game of chance.

Another passage in the same scene should be studied in connection with the above. In lines 157-159 Kent uses the figure of chess, possibly with Regan's speech in mind:

My life I never held but as a pawn  
To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,  
Thy safety being the motive.

Furness takes this to mean simply a 'pledge,' yet how much more effective it is to explain the passage as an allusion to chess, since it is the office of the pawn to keep the king from falling!

May not the reference to *primero* in 1. 1. 125, 'I thought to *set my rest* on her kind nursery,' have been attracted by the figure of the game? Such attraction is common in Shakespeare, and we find an unequivocal example of it in this very Act 1, 4. 91-93, where 'bandy,' a term from tennis, is quickly followed by 'base foot-ball player.'

From the time of Haroun al Raschid to that of Queen Elizabeth, chess was the game of kings, and this tragedy is a royal one. Further, chess is preëminently an intellectual game, and this drama is a struggle of intellects, in which the dynamic point is the breaking down of a noble mind.

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